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17 May 1955

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MEMORANDUM FOR: Deputy Director (Support)

SUBJECT : Emergency Planning Exercise (Operation Alert 1955)

REFERENCES : (A) Memorandum from the Office of Defense Mobilization to The Heads of Executive Departments and Agencies, Dated 28 April 1955, Subject: "Operation Alert 1955."

(B) Memorandum to Deputy Director (Support) from Emergency Planning Officer, Dated 13 May 1955, Subject: "Status of Planning for Participation in the 15, 16 and 17 June 1955 Exercise (Operation Alert 1955)."

Background

1. The Executive departments and agencies of the Government have been directed to participate in an emergency exercise called Operation Alert 1955. Although the development of plans and facilities for emergency relocation is a continuing responsibility of agencies and departments having essential wartime functions, this particular exercise is of unusual significance because it contemplates the actual testing of the "present capability of the agencies to conduct essential wartime functions at relocation sites under conditions of sustained alert." On June 15, 16 and 17 other agencies and departments with whom CIA has continuing working relationship will redeploy substantial portions of their emergency forces to their relocation sites and will not only test their relocation plans but their ability to conduct portions of their essential wartime functions at these points.

2. The stated purpose and scope of the exercise is to enable agencies to:

a. Evaluate the effectiveness of their relocation planning.

b. Determine present capability of conducting wartime functions * * at relocation sites under conditions of sustained alert.

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c. Test their ability to deal with problems arising under attack conditions.

3. Significant qualifications to the stated scope of the exercise are:

a. Each agency retains primary responsibility for the planning of its operation in this exercise.

b. Each participating agency is charged not to disrupt essential services.

c. The guidelines set forth by the Office of Defense Mobilization are neither minimum nor maximum standards.

Problem

1. The basic problems of CIA with respect to this exercise are:

a. Should CIA participate and to what extent?

b. How shall the exercise be planned so that it is properly coordinated with the ODM and other departments and agencies of the Government and within CIA?

Discussion - Problem a:

1. With respect to the first question CIA should of course participate. Not only has participation been directed by ODM but the President, at the Cabinet Meeting of 22 April, emphasized the importance of participation in this operation by all concerned.

2. The desirable extent and nature of CIA's participation, however, are difficult if not impossible to define with precision at this time. In the first place it seems obvious that CIA should cooperate with other agencies which may desire to test portions of their activities and facilities which are interrelated with those of CIA. To the extent that this can be done without jeopardy to the performance of CIA day-by-day operations, it should be done.

3. As matters stand, we have partial information on the relocation activities planned by certain other agencies during the test, as is set forth in Reference (B). However, since their contemplated testing activities are not fully known at this time and, indeed, can only be ascertained by continuing liaison and joint planning, the extent and nature of cooperative participation desired from CIA cannot yet be determined.

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4. The desirable extent and nature of CIA's internal participation in the testing exercise also cannot be accurately determined in the absence of governing criteria. Only with such criteria can actual planning be undertaken so that the consolidated effort will be reasonable, feasible and orderly.

5. The first decision is whether CIA should make only a nominal effort or an extensive effort to participate in "Operation Alert." The arguments in favor of a minimal effort are the costs and diversion of manpower from current operations and the possibility of weakening the cover of our relocation point. The argument for a greater than minimal effort is simply that Operation Alert is the ideal time to further CIA's emergency planning. Due to the fact that this is and will be a highly publicized Government program, the psychological factors will be present or can be developed among CIA officials and employees so that this exercise can be a useful and constructive test rather than a disrupting chore. Moreover, the public awareness of the exercise will actually facilitate the travel of substantial numbers of CIA personnel to the relocation point without breach of cover or danger of arousing fearfulness on the part of the public.

6. The maximum extent of CIA participation should be governed by rigid criteria and all proposed activities should be carefully planned and controlled to ensure that every phase of the exercise and the composite exercise meets these criteria. Suggested criteria are as follows:

a. The day-by-day operating responsibilities of CIA must not be impaired. To the extent that manpower is diverted from essential current operations it must be restored by extra effort or overtime by persons carrying on current operations.

b. The working hours of any personnel redeployed to the relocation point must be constructively used in orientation, or factual review and testing of emergency facilities and plans.

7. Illustrative of the useful and practical experience and knowledge which can be derived from aggressive participation in Operation Alert are:

a. Familiarization of larger numbers of the emergency force with the redeployment plan, and the relocation site and facilities so that greater knowledgeability and practical intelligence will be available in the continuing process of improving and extending CIA's emergency preparations.

b. Actual testing of basic facilities--billetting, messing, communications and reproduction to determine essential deficiencies.

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c. Review of vital documents by responsible officials to establish their adequacy, availability, and deficiencies.

Conclusions - Problem a:

That CIA should participate in Operation Alert to the maximum useful and practical degree governed by the rigid application of the criteria set forth in paragraph 5a and b.

Discussion - Problem b:

1. This problem is to plan CIA's participation in Operation Alert on a component basis, Agency basis and intra-Government basis and to direct and control such planning so that the over-all exercise meets the established criteria.

2. In recognition of the significantly divergent functions of the three major Agency components, each of the Deputy Directors should assume responsibility for participation by appropriate elements under his jurisdiction. An ad hoc planning mechanism should be established within each major component to guide and control its participation in the exercise in coordination with Agency and extra Agency planning.

3. The senior planning officials of the three major components should constitute an ad hoc planning mechanism for the Agency as a whole to keep the over-all exercise properly oriented and balanced.

4. The CIA Emergency Planning Officer should continue to perform his normal liaison and coordinating functions with ODM and other emergency planning groups in other participating agencies. In view of his normal responsibilities, it is suggested that he be Chairman of the CIA Emergency Planning Task Force.

Recommendation:

That the Director, CIA, approve and direct Agency participation in Operation Alert in accordance with the discussion and recommendations presented in this paper.

Special Planning Assistant, DD/S

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